910e
F641

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.
GIFT OF
Columbian Univ.
Class 910e
F541

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/talesofterrorbyc00fiskrich

MAY 13 1900

THE TALES OF TERROR

BY

CHRISTABEL FORSYTHE FISKE, PH.B.

(CORNELL)

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE COLUMBIAN UNIVERSITY IN PART SATISFACTION OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS, 1899

Reprinted from *The Conservative Review* of March, 1900

THE NEALE COMPANY
431 ELEVENTH STREET, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

THE TALES OF TERROR

BY

CHRISTABEL FORSYTHE FISKE, PH.B.

(CORNELL)

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE COLUMBIAN UNIVERSITY IN PART SATISFACTION OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS, 1899

Reprinted from *The Conservative Review* of March, 1900

THE NEALE COMPANY
431 ELEVENTH STREET, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

910a
F541

Copy
Columbia University

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

THE TALES OF TERROR

By Christabel Forsythe Fiske, M.A.

Away back in the days when Poetry had dropped her wings and was walking with orderly tread, when Pope and his successors were peopling Windsor Forest with classical gods and fauna, two men fell a-dreaming, a vagary not often indulged in during that unshaded glare of Augustan daylight. And the thrush in Thompson's heart sent so sweet a song thrilling out through that weary, conventional old world that other birds stirred in their nests and joined the strain, while Walpole's Will-o'-the-wisp vision likewise led him out from the trim garden-plots of the Classicists into a wild forest where he and his followers beat out a little tangled by-path forgotten now for many a day, but worthy of kinder treatment, if only for the splashes of sunshine which surprise us here and there, and for the fact that, far on in its windings, two fair spirits step out from its mazes into the golden highway over which the Great march on into immortality. It is down this old, neglected wood-path that we will wander for a while.

Heine speaks somewhere of "that inexplicable mysterious shudder which seizes one in reading these apparently harmless tales." He questions, "whence does it arise if not from some half-unconscious undercurrent of our being, to which indefinite element the author has appealed?" Dunlop speaks more explicitly. He says, "There exists in every heart at all susceptible to the influence of the imagination, a certain superstitious dread of the world unknown which easily suggests the ideas of commerce with that world." Now we all know how the Classicists had laughed to scorn any tendency toward fanciful superstition. They viewed things in clear daylight. An ingrained tendency of the human soul cannot, however, be eternally snubbed; and in the general emancipation from the iron rule of the Classicists

134981

the superstitious soul-fibre, which the most prosaic of us at times recognize, claimed its right to stretch itself after its long repression. But how could a ghost trail its robe through the plain, matter-of-fact world of Augustan sunshine? Instinctively the mind flew back to the dear old days of mediæval darkness when churchyards yawned unchallenged, and an inheritance of phantoms was the proud possession of any family worth knowing. And thus it was that the spirit of feudal days laid hold of Horace Walpole, and found expression in his Castles both of Strawberry Hill and of *Otranto.*

One point should be specially borne in mind, the neglect of which has led to much false criticism. The distinct appeal to the superstitious element in our souls, this power to arouse in us that "inexplicable mysterious shudder" of which Heine speaks, is the test by which we must judge these books. Do they, as a whole (those of the representative writers, I mean, not the ridiculous host of imitators who turned the whole school into a laughing stock), do they succeed in stimulating us to a mental state of fearsome delight? This is the only fair standard by which to judge this department of literature. What does it matter that the heroes are sticks and the heroines dolls? It was not to create character that Mrs. Radcliffe wrote. What difference if we are accompanied through desolate castles and vaults by weeping Emilys and fainting Amelias? They are the merest fringe of the story—the pivots on which it turns. The real heroine is you yourself,—the life and heart of the story is the thrill of your own sensation as you shiver at the storm which moans at the window and rustles the loose tapestry.

Another fact must be duly considered. Our point of view must be correct if we expect to enjoy the terror of these novels. Any one who looks forward to the palpable excitement of lying awake all night shivering at the horror portrayed will be disappointed. More often than not we shall see no ghost at all, and we should realize this fact before we begin. We should approach these terror-tales in precisely the same mood in which parties of gay young people plan invasions of "haunted houses." Such a party of girls started

one night through the old Tayloe mansion down on Nineteenth Street near the river. Of course we knew beforehand that it was empty of all but ourselves; and yet—the mystery of it as we stole along with lighted tapers and hushed voices! What was that rustle just behind us? And that shadow over there in the far corner of the desolate old banqueting hall, where years and years ago a guest once murdered his host as they sat at wine? And that curious tap-tap-tap which followed our hushed steps steadily down the spiral staircase! Compared to this subtle tingling of nerve and brain the intrusion of a real ghost would have seemed vulgarly palpable. Had we seen a sheeted figure actually stalking through the hall, we should at once have suspected a mischievous brother or two.

It must not be supposed, however, that the fear attendant upon supernatural occurrences is the only sort which our writers succeed in arousing. It is astonishing through what a range they play upon the soul's susceptibility to terror. The emotions to which our spirits are subject during a perusal of these books vary from the mere thrill of weird pleasure inspired by "Monk" Lewis's *Spirit of the Frozen Ocean,* to the horror of physical repulsion occasioned by the brute violence of Maturin's mob scene. The Inquisition, convent horrors, the foulness of prison and hospital, the ravages of tempest and violent men, alike stir our susceptibilities of fear and pity. These material terrors, however, are commonly subsidiary to the main purpose. They are intended to subdue the soul of hero and reader alike into tremulous readiness for the ghostly experiences. We shall see later how this artistic subservience is sometimes violated by the brutality of Lewis and the morbidness of Maturin. Likewise we shall see how the terror is furnished largely by the dangers and horrors of adventure and physical phenomena to the almost total exclusion of the supernatural. The omission of this seemingly essential ingredient, however, does not at all exclude these novels from the Terror Class, since it is evidently omitted with the greatest regret by the writers, who, fully in sympathy with the spirit of the other terrorists, are manifestly pining for a ghost or two. The supernatural is omitted only in obedience to a stern exigency of the occa-

sion—which exigency will be later discussed in its connection.

The novels of the Terror School will divide themselves, for our purpose, into three classes: First, the so-called Conventional novels beginning with Walpole and culminating in Mrs. Radcliffe. Second, the Reactionary novels, such as Beckford's *Vathek* and Brown's *Wieland.* Third, the germ of the Historical novel, such as Leland's *Longsword* and Lee's *Recess.*

It is well, at this point, to emphasize the fact that we have, in this paper, limited ourselves either to the few great novelists of this school, or to those representative members of it who show some distinct tendency conducive to its general evolution. With imitators, even so successful a one as Roche, we are compelled through lack of space to have nothing to do. We must even omit with regret from the second section so brilliant a success as Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein,* since its distinctly reactionary tone had been anticipated by writers necessarily discussed.

I. THE CONVENTIONAL NOVELS

We will first deal with the Conventional Novels. It is interesting to note that Horace Walpole's reaction of feeling toward things mediæval was as timorously manifested in literary form as were all other tendencies toward emancipation from classical fetters. He did, indeed, make one bold break in the architectural line by the building of his Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill. The summer whim of a man like Walpole, however, could not challenge severe criticism. It was quite another matter to join himself formally with the budding literary sect of Romanticists. It was years, therefore, before he ventured to dream his castle of Strawberry Hill into *Otranto,* and even then he published it as a manuscript he had found by chance, and, until its success was assured, refused to acknowledge his paternity to this wild-brain child. The enthusiastic reception of this absurd book shows more effectively than any other symptom the growing eagerness of the people for escape from the matter-of-fact and commonplace; while the delight with which even Gray welcomed its

very clumsy ghost, demonstrates conclusively the more significant fact that Literature itself was weary of the cold daylight so long reflected on its pages.

The preface to this pioneer novel of Walpole's contains, among other interesting things, a statement of the author's intention to produce a work which will unite features of the mediæval Romances of Chivalry with those of modern novels. In this ambitious endeavor Walpole and his followers failed most signally. The adventures of the unfortunate Matilda in *Otranto* certainly do not smack of modern life; while a glance into *Huon of Burgundy*, for instance, makes it impossible for us to regard Walpole's resolution seriously. A ponderous magic helmet dashed down at inconvenient moments is a poor substitute for the enchantment, airy as thistle-down, which floats through mediæval lore. In the one, Oberon's fairies dance through elf-charmed woods. In the other, sheeted ghosts stalk through vaulted dungeons. The Romances are bewitched; the Tales are haunted.

Again, the moral tone is different. In the Romances the hero indulges in the most shocking intrigues, generally with the wife of his friend or relative. The maiden woos the favored knight with the utmost candor, even arranging little social games of chess for the most scandalizing stakes. At all these somewhat appalling love episodes the author and all concerned look on apparently with the most placid approval. In the Tales, on the other hand, we shall see that the moral tone is on the whole high.

The styles of these two departments of literature are strikingly alike. The Romance runs along like a child's fairy tale with an epic simplicity. The knight starts out any morning knowing that he may be turned into a dwarf or a dragon or a dozen different things before night. He takes it as a matter of course. So does his chronicler. Neither of them troubles himself in the very least as to whether the victim deserves such a fate. There is too much marvel still ahead for much reflection. The style of the Tales, on the other hand, is labored and self-conscious. Through all the cavalier's adventures the shadow of his creator stalks beside him. The mental attitude of the early chronicler imparts a charm to

his work which his imitator completely lacks. He does not care at all how his hero appears. Neither does his hero. This lack of self-consciousness imparts to him the grace of a rollicking child; and we are equally pleased at the vociferous abandon with which the redoubtable Huon, caught in the enchanted forest, sobs out his fear of the elf Oberon, and with the delightful pluck with which he afterwards accosts that fairy. The heroes of Walpole and Radcliffe would have scorned any such exhibition of weakness. At the approach of danger they strike an attitude, call on God and their lady, and plunge into it, looking around immediately for approval. Personally, we prefer Huon's panic to Vivaldi's posing. But one must read for himself the old Romancers to perceive how entirely Walpole and his followers failed in this portion of their task. Their work no more resembles their model than blood-stained armor resembles airy gauze—or restless ghosts, dancing fairies,—or dungeon horrors, moonlit witchery.

Before tracing through these Conventional Terror Tales their all-important element,—that of the supernatural,—and pointing out certain individual peculiarities of each representative novelist, we will touch a moment upon two characteristics of the whole class. First, the stilted moral tone; second, the stock characters. Concerning the first point, we will not pause over the fact that virtue is painted very white indeed and vice very black. The persecuted maiden and the heavy villain are familiar to all readers. We would rather call attention to the manner in which our authors strive to triple-guard our morality by saving even our notions of conventional propriety from the slightest shock. They chaperone us and their characters with the utmost strictness. Mrs. Radcliffe is a very Dame Grundy in this respect. She, like Walpole and like her predecessors, is constantly haunted by fear of unseemly situations. One ludicrous incident will illustrate many. In *Udolpho*, in the midnight gloom, Emily's persecutor crept up to her turret chamber on ill designs intent. The situation is cleverly worked up. A tremor of terror is on us, as the villain steals softly up through vaulted corridor and spiral staircase. As we think of the maiden lying white-robed and unconscious in

the canopied bed, we long madly for some miraculous appearance of the faithful Valancourt. Slowly the recreant knight steals up through the last spiral staircase to the maiden's door. He tries the latch! It yields! Good heavens! Will Valancourt get there in time? The villain creeps along through the dim apartment, his distorted shadow crouching behind him. He has reached the bed, he has pushed aside the curtains. Ye gods! What happens now? Does Emily, awaking, spring to her feet and stand before him like a strong white angel, causing him to crouch and quiver before the august glory of her womanhood? Not at all. At this overwhelming moment Mrs. Radcliffe steps forward and gravely announces, "Fortunately Emily had not undressed before retiring for the night." Heaven be praised! To be sure there is no earthly reason, apparently, why Emily should not, on this particular occasion, have made her usual preparations for bed. But that is not the point. The situation is saved. The ensuing scene proceeds as decorously as an afternoon tea. Wandering through these pages we watch many a sweetheart borne by gallant cavalier from the midst of flaming, falling rafters; but never does the author fail to take time to assure us, as in *Deloraine*, of the scrupulous care with which she has managed to complete her toilet. Not always in her right mind, she is invariably clothed.

Not content, however, with allowing these models of propriety to impress their own lesson, the author is constantly on hand with precept upon precept. There is one place in *Deloraine*, where Godwin actually leaves a girl whirling over the edge of a precipice, presumably to describe circles in midair, while he dilates for several pages on the advantage of self-control under such circumstances.

In turning to our second point, that of the stock characters with their inevitable result of wire-pulled plot, we are reminded of Pope's recipe for an epic poem,—"Take a storm, a dream, six battles, three sacrifices, funeral games, a dozen gods in two divisions, shake together until there arises the froth of a lofty style." We might follow his method and give a formula for the production of a Conventional Terror Tale,—a storm, a ghost, a maiden, a castle. In other words, there are certain elements which must

enter into a story of this kind. They are as necessary as lettuce, vinegar, oil, and pepper to salad. There may or may not be chicken or shrimps, but the foundation remains the same.

These ingredients, however, are mixed in various proportions and forms. Sometimes they are poured in *en masse*, sometimes the merest flavor is perceptible. Take the marriage plotting parent for instance. He is not always the maiden's father saying, "Girl, behold your future lord," and pointing to some despicable specimen of humanity. Sometimes, as in *The Albigenses*, this inconvenient relative has been deceased for many years, but has complicated things for the young couple by imposing on his infant son the amiable vow of exterminating root and branch the family of his hereditary enemy. This is eminently embarrassing for Paladour, who discovers on his wedding-night that his beautiful bride is the sole survivor of his father's foe. He avoids his little task by plunging the dagger into his own heart in the presence of his beloved, who at once follows his example by stabbing herself. They are found bathed in gore, and dreadful confusion ensues. Both survive, however, but the vow still holds Paladour, whose wife, whom he thinks dead, follows him to camp in the disguise of a page. And what would have happened, when she disclosed herself to him, heaven knows, except that Count Raymond, Paladour's father, who was not dead at all, rushed in at an opportune moment and absolved him from his vow!

Another important stock character in these novels is the servants. Most of these servants, with their exasperating talkativeness, are mere feeble echoes of Shakespeare's "Nurse," and dreadful bores, always excepting Pietro in *The Italian*. He is delicious from beginning to end! Any one wanting a glimpse of the vein of catchy cleverness too often smothered in Mrs. Radcliffe by her pompous machinery, has only to seize on this book and become acquainted with Pietro.

As for the heroine, poor girl, she has been so mercilessly made fun of from Mr. George Meredith down, that we will, for the most part, pass her over, except to say that possibly these milk-and-water girls are to be preferred to the hectic

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

heroine of modern sensationalism. The insipid peach is, after all, better and sweeter than the one at whose heart a worm is gnawing, however dazzlingly the phosphorescent radiance of decay may spread itself over the surface. But this is far from the point. The supernal goodness of our Matildas interests us little. Some exhibition of that other quality, supposed in some flippant minds to accompany supernal goodness, namely, hopeless stupidity, seems to deserve attention. These girls seem utterly lacking in common sense. For one thing, they inherit from Mrs. Radcliffe and her School an incredible reverence for the conventions. There is Julia, for instance, in *The Sicilian Romance.* Her lover had discovered her fleeing from the power of an enraged and all-powerful nobleman. As the sun rises on them he pleads marriage in a neighboring monastery, as a means of checkmating the nobleman and ensuring their happiness. Delay means eternal separation, for the Count is close behind them. Considering the fact that she has been wandering around the woods all night with this young man, one would conclude that Julia's pink-and-white propriety would lead her to consider this the only respectable thing to do. But no! Her brother has recently been killed by bandits, and Julia insists, before she will consent to think of marriage, on observing the conventional period of mourning at a spot, by the way, within perfectly easy reach of the indignant and all-powerful nobleman!

If our heroine's scruples are exasperating to an honorable lover, her utter lack of tact in dealing with her various assortment of brutal captors is perfectly maddening. In *The Albigenses* Isabella of Courtenaye is carried off by an outlaw. Now this outlaw wants to marry her, and is inclined to treat her with the utmost gentleness, hoping that time and reflecton will bend her to his purpose. Considering the fact that Isabella knows that her lover is, at that moment, in the castle plotting her escape, it is obviously her policy to temporize and conciliate. Is that her course? Not at all. We must blame, yet we cannot but admire, the reckless hauteur with which the highborn maiden repels the advances of the nameless adventurer. But when it comes to calling him the scum of the earth, and treating him generally with a scornful con-

tempt which would make a worm turn, we feel that any self-respecting robber must have felt impelled to violent measures. And when she actually disclosed the fact that his other captive is her lover, we lose all patience and willingly consign them both to the tomb. Instead, they escape down a rope ladder which conveniently hooks itself to the window by some means or other.

It is, however, in their relations to each other that heroine and hero shine out in their full lustre. We have spoken, in another place, of the contrast between these stories and the old Romances of Chivalry. In these latter, there is a simple expression of this elemental passion which, though it may at times repel our finer senses, is yet natural and inevitable. Rymenhild and Horn, Esclaramonda and Huon, may at times be somewhat indecent; but they are at least impulsive, simple, and straightforward. And when, for some reason, the chronicler has chosen to curb his looseness of expression, the scenes are really lovely. That for instance between Arthur and Guenever in the Romance of Merlin. Compare with it the meeting between Isabella and Sir Paladour in *The Albigenses*. The two scenes are alike in setting, each taking place in a banquet hall of the old feudal castle. The gorgeous Lady of Courtenaye, on her chair of state, surrounded by all the pomp of feudal magnificence, forms a heartless contrast to Guenever as she stands in simple garb and attitude offering the wine-cup to her father's deliverer; while Paladour's high-flown language is absurd compared to the hot words bursting from Arthur's heart.

It will be seen from the above statements that a profound knowledge of human nature is not characteristic of the novels we are studying. It is pre-eminently a work of plot and machinery. The characters are little wooden men and women such as we used to play with in our Noah's arks, and expose at pleasure to the ferocity of the tigers or bears or any other of Noah's protégés. We used to wonder that they remained just as yellow and hard and smiling as ever in face of such horrid perils! And thus it is with the characters moving through these pages. They are the mere sport of circumstances. The author throws them into dungeons, tortures, and manifold dangers. They weep or smile as he

pulls the string. The story does not take its trend because the heroine, forsooth, insists upon acting out the faith that is in her in spite of fate. She fits herself to fate like jelly to a mold. Such pliancy was necessary to this form of fiction. Once put into it a bustling, everyday girl like Austen's Elizabeth Bennett, and the mold would have broken into a thousand pieces.

These characteristics, then,—an unsuccessful attempt at mediæval local coloring, a stilted moral tone, and the inevitable combination of stock characters and wire-pulled plot,—we take to be three main characteristics of the Conventional class of Terror Tales. In their consideration we have left out, for the moment, the predominating element of the supernatural. We will now glance into the separate novels.

The Castle of Otranto is interesting not from any merit of its own, but from its position as first in the field. Considering it as pioneer, its comprehensiveness of scope is remarkable. In the preface it explicitly strikes the keynote of the School. "Terror," we are told, "is the author's principal Engine." All the ingredients of which we have already spoken find their place in this concoction, though so badly mixed and tempered as to render it arid and insipid. The Gothic castle, with its necessary equipment of trap doors, secret passages, haunted chambers, looms up as a model for all ensuing architecture. Storms come when called. The ghost makes his portentious début—a genuine ghost, no sheet and pillow-case affair. Helmet and statue shiver at the touch of magic, and pictures walk around.

The supernatural element in this book is so clumsily palpable that Clara Reeve, who, in 1777, published her *English Baron*, while announcing her book as the offspring of *Otranto*, condemned Walpole's extravagance and declared her intention of keeping this ghostly element within reasonable bounds. Such moderation hints vaguely at Mrs. Radcliffe and becomes Reeve's chief merit. In this she shows advance on Walpole. He strives to excite our fear by *bona fide* ghosts and magical machinery. Where Reeve follows his lead she is not, perhaps, so extravagantly absurd, but she is at least stupid and powerless.

But on occasion she has soared above him to a point he never dreamed of. She touches deftly, at least once, on the human soul quivering beneath the impulse of vague, apprehensive fear. Walpole's sluggish heroes needed a real bogy to stir their nerves. The picture Reeve draws of Edmund wandering at midnight through the apartments of the Old East Wing, through the rafters of which the rain forced its way, and along the passages of which the wind moaned and sighed, reached a high degree of artistic excellence. Compared to it, the ready-made ghosts Walpole sets up seem vulgar and absurd. At this moment, at least, Reeve has touched with successful finger the vast field of Subjective Terror in which Radcliffe was to achieve her fame. It is provoking that this admirable little scene serves merely as prelude to an absurd visitation, in which Edmund's deceased mother administers to him and to the reader several pages of stupid advice.

Both Reeve and Walpole were enthusiastically received by the public and boasted numerous disciples, whom, for lack of time or merit, we shall pass over. We turn at once to Mrs. Radcliffe, who published her first novel in 1791, and in whom the so-called Conventional type of Terror Tale culminated.

Mrs. Radcliffe's work is marked by a change in the treatment of the supernatural. Her predecessors, Reeve and Walpole, marshalled an imposing line of phantoms upon which to hang the terror of their tales. Mrs. Radcliffe, on the other hand, traces to natural phenomena most of her supernatural appearances. This has been by some considered a blemish. She has been accused of shams and deception. It is hard to understand this objection. The strange ice-cold Hand that seized my mother's in the dark hall was no less thrilling to the little group to whom I was telling the story, because they knew beforehand I was telling the truth. The words, "Asleep! Asleep! Asleep!" low, mysterious, and awful, which floated to me down the staircase of a house recently made desolate by death, curdled my blood none the less because my common sense assured my affrighted nerves that the phenomenon must be explained.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

This, then, seems to me Mrs. Radcliffe's signal merit. She marched ahead boldly and took possession of the field barely hinted at by Clara Reeve. Human life as it surges and hums in the active world, she does not know. The passions of Love, of Hate, of Pride, of Avarice, she handles clumsily. But the passion of Fear she does know, and that so thoroughly that she scorns any extensive use of terrors to which only children are really subject, and chooses those which may justifiably shake the strongest nerves. A man wandering through convent-vaults at midnight may well start at the low groan behind him, even though it be but the stifled cry of a tortured prisoner; and a girl sitting alone at stormy twilight in a wind-swept turret, poring over weird pages of moth-eaten manuscript, would be stolid indeed if she did not impute some sinister meaning to the creeping rustle of the tapestry at her shoulder.

Thus to the Gateway of the varied Realm of Subjective Fear do we see Mrs. Radcliffe conducting the erratic Genius of our novels, and it was perhaps an inevitable result of her determination to avoid sheet and pillow-case frauds, that we should find emphasized in her books the element of material or physical terror. So long as ghosts walked at pleasure, they were naturally supposed to be capable of supplying the necessary quota of thrills. It was a different matter when it came to dealing, for the most part, with the prepossessions of a soul. The writer must look around for all possible means of subduing it to the proper key of tremulous expectation. And what more conducive to such a result than the varied aspects of physical suffering touching the spirit through a series of quivering nerves?

Considering the time in which these stories were laid, very obviously the tyrannous power of church and prelate lay easily in the path of the writer who was seeking for scenes of physical oppression. Mrs. Radcliffe seized eagerly on these elements; and thus it was that the convent powers rose imposingly into view, and that the dread halls of the Inquisition swung back their heavy doors to the airy touch of imagination. And if ever a suit of libel is justifiable, surely the venerable Mother Church would have right to bring one against our author and her successors. The mon-

asteries are almost uniformly represented as the abodes of depravity, and we give our heroine up for lost whenever she comes in sight of one. But however much or however little foundation there may be for these representations they are certainly used to great effect. Around these convent walls hangs a veil of mystery and dread. We tremble in the wind-swept turret with Ellena as she sits alone in the twilight meditating on the pit yawning at her feet by the machinations of the treacherous abbess. We shiver in the midnight dusk of the vast, desolate church as we watch the penitent monk prostrate at his devotions. We enter shudderingly the dungeon where the recreant nun, her dead baby at her breast, lies languishing, shut in from light and air. In all these convent-glimpses, Mrs. Radcliffe is admirable. But she is not so successful in her dealing with the Inquisition. It may be said, however, that, on the whole, she succeeds finely in her use of this element of physical terror which she has brought from comparative insignificance into striking prominence. And to her great credit it must be noted that she never violates its artistic subservience to the supernatural element. Later writers, we shall see, revelled in morbid physical horror for its own sake. Of this outrage Mrs. Radcliffe is never guilty.

Little need be said of the well-recognized descriptive power of Mrs. Radcliffe. All know how her books abound in exquisite landscapes, notably at sunset. Her purples and golds and blues are lovely, and tiresomely familiar. One phase, or rather tendency, of this descriptive power, however, does not seem to have been sufficiently, if at all, recognized. It is a tendency which dignifies it as expression does a lovely face.

To appreciate fully this tendency we must note one curious fact, namely, that our old poets and writers as a rule shrank from the more savage aspects of nature, dwelling almost uniformly on its gentler summer side. Shakespeare, to be sure, heightened the horror of Lear's madness by a tempest; and through all ages writers, including our Terrorists, have turned to good account in terrific situations the power of the stormy elements. But these were not regarded as in themselves capable of affording a high degree of

æsthetic pleasure. It remained for Shelley and his age to say, "I love winds and waves and storms."

Now Radcliffe, however antiquated in other respects, was in this point quite up to date. She might almost be called Wordsworthian. Her characters, however wooden, are yet possessed of "that pervading love of nature" by which the Lake Poet meant spiritual sympathy with nature. They are filled with that "extrinsic" passion for nature which is, being interpreted, that love for natural phenomena which is not limited to smooth landscapes and sunny aspects. Emily in *Udolpho* and Ellena in *The Italian*, when carried off by enemies, the one to the castle, the other to the convent, passed through scenery stupendous and awful with roaring torrent and beetling crag. One would suppose that these unhappy girls, forced towards unknown horrors, would be depressed by the gloomy majesty of the surrounding landscape. Not at all. They forget their troubles as they gaze into the dizzy ravines and up to the towering precipices,—scenery such as older writers and tourists had spoken of with half impatient horror, and about which Gray had scarcely dared to rave for fear of being called romantic, a fear which is, in itself, a tribute to these writers as evidencing a tendency in them toward the large universal love of nature to ring out later from Wordsworth's muse. More than this, our Ellena and Emily gained calmness and strength for future struggle from the awful majesty of mountains. We can imagine the austere Lake Poet, shaking his head with disgust over these wild novels, surprised into an approving nod at lighting, in these scenes, on so signal an illustration of his own theory of a spiritual connection between the soul of man and of nature.

We have said that in Radcliffe the Conventional Terror novels culminated. The unprecedented popularity of her books led to a deluge of imitations which went far towards discountenancing the whole School. From her time on, symptoms of reaction begin to appear. In 1797 Jane Austen wrote her delicious burlesque on the *Udolpho* novels, *Northanger Abbey*. The fact that she could not, during her lifetime, find a publisher for this book shows that, as an expression of public opinion, it was premature. While Rad-

cliffe lived and wrote, the reaction was slow and unobtrusive, making itself felt rather by the appearance of new tendencies in the novels of the School than in open expressions of disapproval. To the consideration of these tendencies we now turn our attention.

II. THE REACTIONARY NOVELS

This class of novels may be called Reactionary, because it is marked by more or less revolt against the Walpole-Radcliffe machinery. The first example of this Reactionary class appeared while the old Conventional Novels were in the full blast of their popularity—away back in 1777. Beckford's *Vathek*, in its bold originality and distinctness from the fashionable type, was a child born before its time; and in it appears all the brilliant quality which occasionally accompanies such premature birth. *Vathek* is in a sense the masterpiece of the whole school.

There are in it three marked points of departure from the old type: first, an entire dropping of Gothic mediæval coloring; second, the introduction of genuine humor; third, a glimpse now and then of something resembling lifelikeness of character. Concerning the first point, it need only be said that the author discards entirely Gothic castles and knights and the rest of the old machinery, and sets us down in the midst of dazzling Oriental scenes. His success in this line is evidenced by Byron's dictum that, as an Eastern tale, even *Rasselas* must bow before it. As for the vein of humor hitherto absent from the Terror Tales, it is so subtile and delicious that any quotation is impossible. Indeed, so delicate is this humor, that we question how large a percentage of readers would be much affected by it. But to a mind susceptible to its influence, this little book is a spring of delight. The half page describing the encounter between Carathis and Evlis, and the scrap concerning one of the Genii who played the flute, are good tests by which to discover the presence or absence of this susceptibility.

The successful bits of character-glimpses deserve especial notice. It must not be for a moment supposed that in this fantastic little book there is anything like a successful full-

length portrait. But there is here and there an approach to reality, which is more than can be said for previous writers. Carathis, for instance, is more than impossibly wicked. But there is a distinct smack of life in the nonchalant manner in which she carries off her evil deeds and spurs on her vacillating kinsman. Her acts are incredibly atrocious, but she goes about them in precisely the debonair self-possessed spirit of an unscrupulous woman of the world, who encounters failure cooly enough, confident of bringing it in the end to success. In fact, the very Genii in their brisk attendance on their special charges, and their helpful little ways of raising castles in a night, are far more characteristic individuals than any who have hitherto appeared in the pages of the Terror School.

One minor innovation of Beckford's was the introduction of the devil. Hitherto it was only the spirits of just men made perfect who interfered in mundane affairs. We shall see how popular his Satanic Majesty became in following novels.

We have said that *Vathek* was an instance of merely individual revolt from the Radcliffe School. The man who first gave expression to the premonitory symptoms of general uneasiness appeared some seventeen years later. It was the high-pressure moral tone of the old novels that was too much for Lewis. He flew straight to the other extreme, and, still holding to the old machinery of ghosts and Gothic castles, published what has been justly called one of the worst books in the English language. I think I am not wrong in saying that there is one scene in *The Monk* which must cast a deep shadow on any pure spirit who has once gazed upon it.

Another point worthy of noticing in Lewis is the undue emphasis given to the element of physical terror. We have seen how in Mrs. Radcliffe's hands this element was always kept in artistic subservience. Lewis is the first who handles material horror for mere love of it. Indeed we may say that the immorality of his book consists in the brutal frankness with which he details physical outrages worse than death. He thus strikes a new key for following writers. Not that any other of them, so far as I know, actually allows this ten-

dency to sully the moral purity of his pages. But henceforward we shall perceive a distinct interest in personal horror *per se* till, in Maturin, it reaches a point well-nigh intolerable.

Lewis likewise emphasizes the more sprightly tone of *Vathek*. The story moves at a more rapid pace than in Radcliffe's pages. The language of Lorenzo and Raymond sounds at times almost like modern club slang, while in one scene Agnes chatters like an up-to-date society girl. Of course such a modern air cannot from an artistic point of view be justified in a novel laid in the Middle Ages. Scott's magical manner of imparting vitality to figures who speak and act in a manner entirely in keeping with the age in which they live, is far better. But Lewis cannot be blamed for not being Scott; and he at least deserves credit for having, in any manner, imparted vivacity to the ponderous movement of these stories.

Lewis follows Beckford in his interest in the Infernal Powers. He seizes on the old legend of a being who has sold his soul to the devil, and works it with considerable ingenuity, though not with the wonderful success with which Maturin, years later, followed him along the same line.

In the same year with *The Monk* appeared a book which, though it cannot be properly included in the school we are studying, yet contained many elements in common with it; it must be mentioned in this connection because of its effect upon an able writer who carried the influence of the English Terror Tales into American literature—a writer who was in a sense the precursor of Hawthorne. This book is *Caleb Williams*, and to *Caleb Williams* surely belongs the literary paternity of *Edgar Huntly*, *Arthur Mervyn*, and most of Charles Brockden Brown's heroes.

Never was the influence of one man upon another more strongly defined than in the case before us. In *Edgar Huntly* the hero is precisely the same morbid, super-sensitive soul as in *Caleb Williams* and *Deloraine*. In the opening chapter, he, like Caleb and Deloraine, utters the most extravagant self-denunciation. Nothing can equal his abject remorse. We are horrified! This man must at the very least have slaughtered his entire family in their beds! We discover at last that he has merely killed his enemy in the very clearest case

of self-defence. All the principal characters in Brown's novels, Arthur Mervyn conspicuously, are possessed of the same insatiable curiosity that plunged Caleb into his scrapes; they pry into people's boxes with the same unscrupulousness, and tell of it with the same naïveté.

The most noticeable point in Brown is the manner in which, at one explicit stroke of the pen, he abolishes much of the old machinery to which even "Monk" Lewis had clung. In his preface to *Huntly* he says, "One merit at least the writer may claim, that of calling up the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader by means hitherto unemployed. Puerile superstitions and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras, are the materials usually employed for such ends. The incidents of Indian hostility and the perils of the western wilderness are far more suitable for a native of America. These, therefore, are in part the ingredients of this tale, and these he has been ambitious to detail in vivid and faithful colors." In other words, Charles Brockden Brown has removed his scenes and characters from old feudal days and scenes, and planted them squarely down in the America of his own generation. His heroes are no longer mediæval knights, but modern Americans. What a change! From what resources has he excluded the Engine of Terror! Ghosts and superstitions may, presumably, dwell in the hoary castles of Chivalry. But modern scepticism has refused them entrance to the mansions and huts of the American colonists. What, then, shall take their place? Brown glances back at the subjective tendency that marked Mrs. Radcliffe's work. He will develop it to perfection. His field shall be the realm of the psychical. Psychical phenomena shall be his Terror-engine.

Thus it is that we find no ghosts in Brown's books—not one so much as dares to show his head. But our nerves are not calmed by this circumstance. We would rather any day—or night—encounter a good old-fashioned apparition than one of his sleep-walkers or ventriloquists. It is in specifically psychological problems, then, that Brown is chiefly interested. *Wieland* is full of ventriloquism, *Huntly* of somnambulism. The former is by far the more powerful. The fascination of the story lies in the thrilling effect with which

the author has used the uncanny power which forms its motive. From the moment when, on the stormy night, the tones of the wife, whom he knows to be far distant, float weirdly to Wieland up the wooded slope, our attention is held and bewildered. The soft voice which thrills in on Clara through the thunderous twilight,—which breathed at her pillow at midnight,—which shrieked at her very ear as she was making her way up the dark staircase, touches us with the same horror that enveloped the haunted girl. The face revealed to her in the flash of the lamp as she turns wildly, "every muscle tense, forehead and brow drawn into vehement expression, lips stretched as in the act of shrieking, eyes emitting sparks," out-terrorizes a whole phalanx of ghosts. An indescribably weird effect is imparted to the scene by the words, "The sound and the vision were present and departed at the same instant, but the cry was blown into my very ears while the face was many paces distant!" *Edgar Huntly*, with its somnambulism, is not equally successful. The first appearance of the sleep-walker is somewhat impressive. But this auspicious opening is a promise unfulfilled. Clithero's history and remorse are too absurd, and after that the whole book resolves itself into a tale of Indian adventure, which, indeed, in its prophecy of Cooper, is the most interesting part of the story.

Arthur Mervyn, a story of the Yellow Fever Plague of 1798 in New York, gives ample scope for the growing interest in physical horrors which, as we have seen, is a characteristic of the School of Terror. Though Brown certainly dwells far too much on this physical horror for its own sake, he is yet eminently skilful, also, in using it justifiably for the artistic enhancement of higher sensations. One striking instance of his power in such combination is that in which the apparition appears to Arthur as he stands alone in the desolate chambers of a fever-smitten house from which all the inhabitants have been removed for burial. "The door opened," it reads, "and a figure glided in. The portmanteau dropped from my hands, and my heart's blood was chilled. If an apparition of the dead were possible, and that possibility I could not deny, this was such an apparition. A hue yellowish and livid, bones uncovered by flesh, eyes ghastly, hol-

low, and woe-begone and fixed in an agony of wonder on me, locks matted and negligent, constituted the vision I now beheld. My belief in somewhat preternatural in this appearance was confirmed by recollection of resemblances between these features and those of one that was dead." Bear in mind that we have been prepared for this appearance by following Arthur for hours through the streets of the death-stricken city, that the damps of infection and disease are rotting the very walls of the house in which he stands, and the reader may perhaps gain some idea of the shock of this sudden appearance. No ghost that I can think of was ever more effective than the ghastly figure of this plague-stricken man.

Brown served as a channel through which the spirit of the Terror School flowed into American literature. His red Indian is only another shape of the wandering terrors, in the form of bandits and outlaws, who pursue adventurous knights and distressed damsels through the pages of the older novels; and this wild man of the woods Brown introduced into literature and handed down to Cooper. The Coras and Alices and Heywoods of the latter novelist, pursued through forests and caves by the savage Hurons with their war paint and tomahawks, inspire us with the same sort of sympathy with which we accompanied Radcliffe's Emilys and Julias over mountains inhabited by bandits. To be sure, the wind that blows through Cooper's forest is fresh and exhilarating and very different from the artificial atmosphere of Mrs. Radcliffe's. But the same appeal to our emotions of fear and sympathy is evident. As for Brown's Indian, he is a mere lay figure compared with the subtle form gliding through Cooper's pages. But the panther scene in *Huntly* is worthy of anything Cooper, or anybody else, ever wrote in the wild beast line.

In Cooper, then, through Brown, we see culminating the element of wild outdoor adventure which holds a not inconsiderable place in the novels we have been studying. Another writer of far greater genius followed Brown along another line. Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* is, from a psychological view, the descendant of Brown's novels.

We have seen how Brown turned away from the palpable

absurdities of the old school to the eerie mysteries of mental phenomena. Hawthorne followed his lead. The problem of mesmerism is airily touched in the novel to which we have referred.

The point which especially strikes us in Hawthorne's romance is that this problem does not, after Brown's style, form the hinge of the story. It is used here, rather, as an airy accompaniment, a strain of weird music breaking now and then upon our ears like the uncanny melody that floated through the gloomy gables from the long-untouched keys of the old harpsichord; or, better, the whole story of the Judge and Clifford and Hepzibah is only a parable whose meaning lies in the essence of that mysterious power which, years and years before, threw a curse upon their line. The persecution of Clifford by the Judge,—his dreary imprisonment on a false accusation in which consisted the Judge's hold upon him,—his quivering dread when at last, for a moment, his tyrant lifts his heavy hand and lets the victim breathe a moment in free sunshine,—his wild cry at the Judge's approach, "Hepzibah! Hepzibah! go down on your knees to him, kiss his feet, entreat him not to come in! Oh let him have mercy on me—mercy—mercy!"—his mad exultation at the Judge's ghastly death, "As for us, Hepzibah, we can dance now, sing, laugh, play, do what we will! The weight is gone, Hepzibah, gone off this weary world, and we may be as light hearted as little Phoebe herself!"—all this story of a life's bondage to another's will is a more striking type of the spiritual fetters, which, by a mysterious occult power, one soul can throw over another.

It is in this handling of the marvelous as an accompaniment to the story rather than as its heart, that Hawthorne has shown his peculiar insight. Hitherto all the stories along this line have been self-conscious and labored. A series of sensations is expected at the beginning by both reader and writer, and these sensations form the very essence of the tale. For the purpose of arousing bewilderment and awe, the authors, as a rule, throw their characters into the most strained and unnatural situations. Girls are sent flying around through woods and over mountains in search of adventures, and even Brown

feels obliged to call in the Yellow Fever Plague. Hawthorne saw deeper. He understood that there is no need of uncommon situations,—that through even the simplest of human lives there runs a strain of mystery. Prosaic little Phoebe, working in the garden among common-place flowers and vegetables, is conscious of strange terror as the Family Curse threatens her for a moment from the eyes of the young artist. Poor old Hepzibah goes about her round of daily drudgery as nurse and shopwoman; but over her from the gables of the old New England house fall shadows and whispers from the past. In short, Hawthorne's alchemy has transmuted the palpable terrors of former writers into that subtle general atmosphere of mystery and awe which, to the thoughtful mind, pervades all human life. Into such actual relation to life itself has Hawthorne succeeded in raising the eerie element of Psychological terror which seemed, in other hands, destined only for a tool of literary sensation. In him culminated this element of Psychological terror, as distinguished from the ready-made ghosts of Reeve and Walpole.

III. THE NOVELS CONTAINING THE GERM OF HISTORICAL FICTION

An interesting article by Mr. Saintsbury in *Macmillan's Magazine*, August, 1894, demonstrates the fact that the birth of the Historical Novel proper is directly due to two tendencies of the latter part of the eighteenth century: first, that which labored for a wider, more accurate knowledge of historical facts, under the inspiration of Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson; and second, that which sought to revive romantic interest in the customs and life of former ages. Saintsbury goes so far as to say, "When in very different ways Walpole, Percy, and Gray with many others, excited curiosity about the incidents, manners, and literature of former times, they made the Historical Novel inevitable."

From this point of view it must at once be seen that the works embodying an element essential to so important a development of Prose Literature contains for the student an interest disproportionate to its intrinsic value. Authentic historical facts could be drawn from the great trio of histo-

REESE LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFO

rians. But the attempt to vivify the past, to make us breathe its airs, to realize its sensations, all this was first clumsily attempted in the work before us.

From this point of view, then, all these Romantic Terror Tales may be said to contain seed of the Historical Novel. In one group of them, however, the groping effort towards Scott is so much more labored and self conscious, that it seems, of itself, to divide them from the rest into a distinct germinal class.

It is an interesting fact that the first effort along this line occurred two years before *The Castle of Otranto.* But for one important omission, this little book, *Longsword,* might seem justly to claim *Otranto's* pioneer position. So important is this omission, however, that it leaves Walpole's prestige unchallenged. Though he writes in the very spirit of the Terrorists, it is evident that Leland felt himself under restraint. Having chosen really historical personages for his subjects he evidently made them the victims of supernatural experiences for fear of discrediting the whole story. It is apparent in more than one place how the author chafed under this restriction. A ghost now! How well it would have suited that dismal dungeon scene, and how effectively it would have glided along that dim corridor before Reginald's guilty eyes! Indeed so entirely is the book in the spirit of our School, so evidently does the author regret his enforced limitation, and so completely do all other essential ingredients make their appearance, that it would be absurd to deny its claim to membership in the Terror School on the ground of the omission of the supernatural, just as it would be absurd to allow it in spite of this omission, to usurp Walpole's novel as pioneer. Here the Romance heroine makes her first appearance, of course in tears. Her gallant cavalier stalks over land and sea, performing all manner of feats. The young woman, fallen into the clutches of villainy, bullies her keeper until we feel almost sorry for him, and though for a time vice triumphs over virtue to an alarming extent, in the end we are soothed and delighted by seeing the two villains strung up on the same tree with a rapidity well calculated to take away one's breath.

Leland's novel, then, acquires its peculiar tone by an attempt to depict not only the local coloring of an historical period, but events and circumstances in the lives of actual personages. Two points in its preface are worthy of notice.

One principle which he lays down separates his book from any previous work along the same line. Such previous work had been, in a manner, a fraud. Tales of adventure had been deliberately intended to deceive the public. Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* are full of impossible incidents which he gravely attempts to foist upon the people. *Robinson Crusoe* is presented to the world as an authentic personage; and Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier* have the same marks of artifice. Leland works a new vein. He says frankly, "The outlines of the following incidents and more minute circumstances are to be found in the ancient English historians. If too great liberties have been taken in altering or enlarging these incidents, the reader who looks only for amusement will probably forgive it." Thus we see laid down in this insignificant book a cardinal principle which should govern the mental attitude of the reader and which emancipates the imagination of the writer from the thraldom of literal fact. His words unite in square and open union the charms of History and Fiction, a union which previous writers had apparently not conceived.

Another point interests us in Leland's preface as striking a modern note. He says, "It is generally expected that pieces of this kind should convey some useful moral"—(this certainly sounds antiquated enough, but let us go on)—which moral is sometimes made to float upon the surface of the narrative, or is plucked up at the proper moment and presented to the reader with great solemnity. The author hath too high an opinion of the judgment and penetration of his reader to pursue this method. If anything lies at the bottom that is worth picking up, it will be discovered without his direction." Now this reads like an article I saw yesterday in a recent number of *The Atlantic Monthly*! How far ahead of the sentiment of its day when moral purposes rode Walpole and the rest like "Old Men of the Mountain!"

In these two points, then, the liberty of adapting historical fact to the exigencies of art, and the disregard of any set

moral purpose,—this old Dublin clergyman, fifty years before Scott, laid down two cardinal principles which should govern the historical novelist. But it was too much to ask that his performance should be worthy of his insight. On the latter point, indeed, we concede the fact that Leland has lived fairly well up to his theory. Though we are somewhat dismayed when, having begun the story blithe in spirit from the promised exemption from long-winded homilies, we stumble straight upon two pages of moral precepts given by Randolph to his sons, still, on the whole, if the book does not move along at an exhilarating pace, it is not on account of a pointed moral.

But what can be said of the hope of artistic selection and combination of which the preface gave us promise, the very essence of successful work? Alas! We cannot find a glimpse of such artistic handling from beginning to end! In the first place the interest of the story is constantly interrupted by the almost insane propensity of the characters for telling yarns. The meeting of two persons is the signal for the relation of the adventures of the newcomer from his earliest youth, followed by a courteous request for an interchange of confidence—a request which is invariably granted. The most insignificant character is accorded this privilege, and if he declines the opportunity Leland obligingly takes advantage of it for him. In the beginning of the book Longsword talks for one hundred and ten consecutive pages about some adventures he had in France, adventures in which we have no sort of interest, being anxious all the time to discover the fate of his beautiful Countess during his absence, a fate which we are given to understand at the beginning is very tragic and interesting. The only item in the Earl's experience which we care about at all is the introduction of Jacqueline, who wears boy's clothes and tears her hair on occasion, which excesses, in contrast to the staid demeanor of most of the Romance heroines, are quite piquant and interesting. Chauvigny, her lover, is likewise exasperating when, on arriving in England, instead of rushing straight to his distracted sweetheart, he sits down with the Earl and talks steadily for twenty-five pages about a foolish little affair with some pirates. His conduct on this occasion,

however, is nothing to that of the Earl himself, who, while the Countess is languishing in the power of a perjured knight and whom only her husband's speedy return can save from dishonor, is flying around the kingdom button-holing every man he meets, from the king down, for lengthy gossips about his stupid scrapes. When it comes, however, to an autobiography by the maid of the Countess, whose only part in the story is good-natured connivance in her Lady's escape, —an autobiography which includes not only her own entire history, but that of her only son, her only son's sweetheart, and the villain who persecuted her only son's sweetheart, and ends with a dissertation on the state of the kingdom during the reign of John,—we throw down the book in despair and look yearningly ahead to Scott's piquant Janets, who know their places well enough to keep their affairs to themselves, and chatter only by indulgence. We might discuss endlessly the stiltedness of the characters of this book, and the pompousness of its style. A quotation or two taken from what is probably the only copy in America of this rare little volume,—to which through the courtesy of the Librarian of Yale University the writer has had access,—will best illustrate how far was this wild little plant-slip from the chastened luxuriance of its later development. These quotations are taken almost at random.

Then in that dreadful moment was my heart's dear treasure, my beloved Dame, present to my distracted mind. Her sorrows crowded upon my busy fancy and I sunk—O my friend, how can I speak it?—I sunk into a coward! Doth that tear now stealing down your furrowed cheek express your pity of my weakness or a sense of my misfortune?

* * * * * * * * * *

Yet hath thy tale renewed some doubts and suspicions, but let suspicions sleep. Then starting up he cried with a loud voice, "And who of my brave followers will undertake the task of repairing instantly to Cornwall and bearing to the fair Jacqueline the news of her father's arrival and conveying her to my castle?" Then stood forth Fitz-alan with five more who defied toil and fatigue, and insisted that this pleasing charge should be entrusted to them. They departed fresh and vigorous as the hind to his day's labor.

* * * * * * * * * *

Here grief threatened to break through the fair reserve of female modesty; and had already fallen in gentle drops down her glowing cheeks which the Earl perceiving checked with a kindly reproving look. Then cried Lesroches, "Let us unite in adoring the invisible Power that directed my steps hither." And beckoning one of his followers, the man retired and soon returned leading young William in his hand, who flew to his father with tears of infant-joy.

We have little room for the crowd of successors to *Longsword* up to the time when Charles Robert Maturin raised the class into something like resemblance to Scott. Possibly, however, we can best gain an idea of the crudity of their efforts by a moment's comparison of Sophia Lee's Leicester with Sir Walter Scott's.

The episode dealt with in both Lee's *Recess* and Scott's *Kenilworth*, the one published some twenty years before the other, is a secret marriage of Leicester's during his time of favoritism with Elizabeth. With how many suppressed wives tradition has credited Leicester we have not taken the trouble to ascertain. The heroine of Sophia's story, however, is not Amy Robsart, but a preposterous young person named Matilda, who, with her twin sister Elinor, are represented as the children of Mary Queen of Scots by the Earl of Norfolk, and born during Mary's captivity in the Tower. After this astounding statement we give ourselves up for lost, and submit without repining to the hands of the juggler.

Now obviously our interest in these episodes lies in Leicester's predicament between his royal mistress and his secreted wife. All matter extraneous to this center of interest is, in a manner, ruled out. Sophia Lee gives us a history of Matilda and her sister from their earliest babyhood—likewise that of the estimable lady to whom Mary at their birth confided them. They were most uninteresting children, who at the age of seven gazed up at the pictures of Mary and Norfolk exclaiming, "Ah, who can these be? Why do our hearts thus throb before inanimate canvas? Surely the thing that we behold is but a part of some great mystery. When will the day come destined to clear it up?" How different from Scott's shifting glance over Amy Robsart's wild-rose girlhood and Leicester's wooing of her! It is merely glanced at in Amy's tender words, "Ah, think not that Amy can love thee better in this glorious garb than she did when she gave her heart to him who wore the russet-brown cloak in the woods of Devon!" How in an instant rises around us those forest trees beneath whose shade a girl listens spellbound to the wooing of her courtly lover. Sophia's Leicester, on the other hand, plunges into the story in the most undignified fashion, running away as fast as he can from some

assassins who chase him thus opportunely into the presence of his beloved. They hide him in a chamber in their Recess for a great many days, during which he entertains his fair protectors with a tedious autobiography, scrambling away into a hiding place at the daily approach of their austere guardian. Finally he marries Matilda, who has been in a dreadful state of nervous prostration ever since his casual mention of a wife who fortunately, however, turns out to have been long deceased.

No better instance can be given of the contrast between Scott's charm of suggestive allusion to events not intimately connected with the story, and Lee's long-winded narratives of such events, than the way in which they handle the friendship existing between Elizabeth and Leicester during the captivity of her youth. Lee's Leicester gives a tedious account through ten dreary pages of the manner in which it sprung up and the services by which it was fostered. Turn to Scott. They stand there, Elizabeth and Leicester, in the midst of her splendid court, both past their bloom, both bearing in their faces the marks of life and care. She extends her hand to him, he kneels and kisses it, not an uncommon court scene, and yet note the grace of it as she whispers, "No, Dudley; Elizabeth has not yet forgotten that while you were a poor gentleman despoiled of your hereditary rank, she was as poor a princess; and that in her cause you then ventured all that oppression had left you,—your life and your honor!" How that "light that never was on sea or land,"—that light which memory throws over youthful days of doubt and struggle and aspiring obscurity glanced back at from the summit of assured success, softens the faces of world-worn courtier and haughty queen as their eyes meet steadily for a moment!

And thus it is throughout the two stories. Amy's seclusion is artistically thrown as foil against the brilliant scenes through which her husband moves. Lee treats us to a full and stupid account of Matilda's life at Leicester's castle, including a very vulgar episode in which the steward makes love to the twin-sister; while Leicester's visits to Cumnor Place, in which Amy plays with his medals and chatters delightfully, are filled by Sophia with a lot of plans in which

Leicester disposes of the audacious steward by shipping him off to America with Sir Francis Drake. For Amy's dramatic appearance before the Queen at Kenilworth, is substituted a lengthy sojourn of Matilda at court, where the only event to vary the monotony is a ponderous flirtation of hers with Sir Philip Sidney, who, only touched on by Scott in accordance with tradition as a graceful youth dreaming of fairies and love charms, lumbers along through Lee's story talking thus, "Yet dear is the sensibility, adored Matilda! O let the tears which now enrich your cheeks be wholly Sidney's!" Sidney's fate, however, in the hands of Sophia, is enviable compared to that of Sir Walter Raleigh. In "Kenilworth" the legends of his courtly chivalry are skilfully reflected in a fascinating figure well-nigh rivalling Leicester in Elizabeth's favor. Could the gallant Sir Walter have seen his name attached as label to a stolid, putty-faced youth scornfully discarded by a girl who, a few weeks previous, had been engaged in a degrading love affair with a lackey, he would have torn his knightly plume with rage. As for Elizabeth, she is transformed by Lee into a vulgar old woman without a single kingly attribute; while Burleigh, throughout his long career, half friend, half subject to his imperious sovereign, is turned into a brutal tyrant before whom his own daughter trembles. In spite of all these absurdities, however, the most striking contrast still remains that between the two Leicesters,—Scott's gallant earl with his ready tongue and magnetic grace, first in court and council, beloved alike of queen and people, and the wooden figure that stalks grotesquely through Lee's pages, the stupid dupe of a false wife (not, it is needless to say, the spotless Matilda, but an unpleasant predecessor), a knight whose courtly manners are exhibited by banging his head violently against the queen's state chair when he sees his sweetheart dancing with a rival.

In 1799 Godwin's *St. Leon*, though condemned by Saintsbury as "a gross anachronism without the remotest notion of local color, antiquarian fitness, or the adjustment of atmosphere and style," yet forms a distinct stepping-stone by which we may clamber up from Lee's gross absurdities to the level of Maturin's really creditable work. We see, then,

that Godwin was link between Sophia Lee's absurdities and something higher. That something higher was the work of Charles Robert Maturin. We must, however, pause here a moment to say a few words about Maturin in connection with the Terror School in general. It is only in his last novel that he passes over into specific relation to Scott. His early novels actually went back to the Radcliffe machinery, which, by this time—1819—had been laughed out of existence by Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey.*

Maturin is, in some respects, the most powerful of the School we have been studying. His knowledge of the human soul is marvellous, and no one knows better than he how to apply to it the Engine of Terror. Its manifestations vary from the creep and quiver of supernatural experience to the revolting physical repulsiveness of the mob scene in *Melmoth.* This passage is almost unreadable, and forms the extreme instance of that morbid revelling in material horror initiated by "Monk" Lewis. Many of his scenes, however, when not injured by these flaws of taste, are the finest in Terror Literature. Compare his account of the Inquisition with that of Mrs. Radcliffe. Hers, however lauded, seems clumsy beside it. As for Maturin's, I can think of no better expression of the mystic awe, with which the iron-hand of the Inquisition, raised over the world, was able to inspire the true children of the Church. The scene where the fire breaks out in the prison and the broken-spirited captives, some condemned to death, some to torture, are led out into the great court in silent, guarded bands where many for the first time in years gaze on the sweep of the heavens, and where fathers and children, long separated, stretch out fettered arms to each other, is vital with meaning and heart-breaking awe. The havoc of the Inquisition was never more vividly portrayed than in that group of pale and broken victims lit up by lurid flame.

Again, his embodiment of the legend of the human being who has sold himself to the devil is much subtler and finer than "Monk" Lewis's. Lewis represents this lost soul as a beautiful woman anxious to gratify her passions at any price. Melmoth is dignified by his consciousness of the eternal curse, and his exorbitant selfishness is at least

illumined by intellect and suffering. His adventures are most strikingly depicted. He visits, as tempter, the sane man shut into the horror of an old-time madhouse,—the father who sees his wife and haggard children crying for bread,—his own high-born wife, who, holding in her arms the child of a marriage he will not acknowledge, is cast out by family and Church to degradation and shame. None of them, as he has done, will purchase exemption from present suffering at the price of eternal salvation.

In this general connection we have space only to say that besides its excessive, and somewhat morbid power, Maturin's intellect is remarkable for its versatile influence and color. It touched intellects as different as Balzac's and Scott's. The former unequivocably admitted his influence, and the latter frankly adored him. His "Tale of the West Indian" in *Melmoth* breathes the very air of Tennyson's Lotos Island. Here and there Poe's own peculiar horror seems to lurk, notably in his dealings with the phenomena of insanity. But the most striking bit of suggestiveness is that which seems to foreshadow the unique, unearthly genius of Maeterlinck. When I read Maeterlinck's dramas I said to myself, "Here at least is something new under the sun, this man whose dreams are made out of nothing more palpable than the silver-rose shadows which flit through the world when light from the dying sun and the rising moon meet across the ocean!" And through all my reading I vainly looked for something resembling him till I fell upon some scraps in Maturin's old novel so alike in tone and color that I held my breath. It was as if Maeterlinck's spirit floating through the world before its incarnation, had struck a wild chord on Maturin's heart to try "its prentice hand." Any one who reads *Les Aveugles* and then turns to the bits in *Melmoth* about the aged father and mother of Walberg, sere and withered as dried leaves, will understand my meaning.

We must not linger, however, over Maturin's general characteristics, but must turn at once to the phase in which we have chosen especially to consider him, namely, his connection with the novels of our third section. In 1825 Maturin published a book which brought this section of our Terror Literature up to a standard of excellence somewhere

within calling distance of Scott, who was at this time in the full flood of his popularity. We have seen how crude had hitherto been the attempts along this line, how clumsily historical personages were ushered upon the stage of fiction, and how events themselves were degraded into toys for jugglers. For the first time a Terror-writer accomplished, without palpable absurdity, the union of historical fact with romantic fiction of which Leland had dreamed. He created, in *The Albigenses*, a work not unworthy to rank as an humble companion of the works of Scott himself, not a mere formless movement of an instinct which afterwards found so glorious expression in that great master.

The Albigenses, it must be remembered, however, is nothing more than an humble companion. The Radcliffian machinery is at times painfully evident. The supernatural effects produced by the Ghostly Woman are not impressive, and the witches are pretty poor caricatures of Shakespeare's famous Three. On the whole it must be admitted that, whether or not it was that Maturin, like Leland, felt himself hampered by the historical thread running through his works, this novel does not compare with his other books in its success in dealing with the emotions of terror.

This limitation in the use of the terrific, however, if it makes his book a less powerful one, serves one highly useful purpose. It makes it far less morbid. It reduces Maturin's strength from something like the frenzied grasp of a maniac to a resemblance to healthy normal force. The wholesome influence of an element of actual earthy fact introduced into the wild chaos of his brain is distinctly visible. He holds himself within bounds. Take, for instance, the episode of Sir Paladour and the Lycanthrope or wolf-man. What a temptation this must have been! What an appeal to his unhealthy love for repulsive detail! But the self-control he has felt compelled to exercise in his dealings with historical personages shows its salutary effect; and the result is one of the finest scenes of subtle terror in fiction. It seems scarcely to be questioned that had Maturin lived he would have found in the field of historical fiction his true work. We must remember that *The Albigenses* is only an experiment, and that, as he became used to the wholesome fetters,

which a shadow of actual fact imposes, his eccentric brain would have moved within them more and more easily, with the result of more and more perfectly artistic scenes. Less and less often would horrors be pushed to an extreme, and in their place more and more frequent would have become such exquisite scenes of weird pleasurable suspense as that in which the knights, gathered together in the firelight in the vast dim hall of the castle around which roars a tempest of rain and thunder, whisper to each other strange tales of ghost and goblin, while in the lofty gallery a single minstrel touched his harp. One must read this passage to realize the effect of that wild voice sighing down to the knights through the crash of the storm.

The lurid atmosphere of his earlier books being thus somewhat cleared, it is wonderful what a stride our author has taken ahead of the former would-be historical novelists. In the first place, the story *moves*. There are very few instances of autobiographical backwater, except when a striking effect demands it. For example, we are as much interested as Paladour in the account of Isabella's adventures when she was carried away for dead; and she does not dawdle in the telling of it, while Sir Paladour listens with foot in stirrup. And this episode is symbolic of the whole. The story waits only on such past events as are absolutely necessary for our comprehension.

There is likewise a dawning sense of the incidents and moments in an historical episode especially adapted to artistic use. For instance, one can imagine the dreary monotony with which Sophia Lee, dealing with this period, would have dwelt equally on every one of a long series of transactions between the Albigenses and the Crusaders. Maturin pounces on the one dramatic moment with unerring instinct. And what a scene he produces with the brilliant company of Crusaders sweeping down on horseback from a verdurous hillside, and, opposite, the haggard crowd of Huguenots toiling on foot down a slope of naked rock, into the plain of conference! We thrill at the spectacle with something of the same enthusiasm which Scott himself rouses in us.

We have noted the wooden puppetry that filled the pages of the germinal Historical Novel. In Maturin's book a change appears. The word of life has been spoken over the dust, and it is turning to flesh before our eyes. It does not breathe yet, but at least it is not wholly clay and wax. Genevieve, the lovely daughter of the hunted Huguenots, however much she may smack of the Radcliffe heroine in her impossible goodness and unparalleled adventures is, at least, not a caricature of Scott's famous daughter of another persecuted sect. In some scenes she breaks entirely through Radcliffian trammels, and is very natural and lovely. Take the scene on the mountain where Amirald rescues her from the bandits. Her whole demeanor with its gentleness, its tact, its tender dignity, is precisely what you would expect of a right-hearted girl under the circumstances, while Amirald, inspired perhaps by her simplicity, throws off likewise all affectation and behaves like a very natural young man indeed. In fact, they are throughout a very refreshing pair of lovers, the most delightful, perhaps, in Terror Literature.

Maturin's plentiful introduction of humor helps to bring his work nearer up to date. This element, as we have seen, has been sadly lacking in the novels we have been studying, especially among the historical fiction germs. All moved with portentous solemnity. *Longsword* has not one gleam of humor from beginning to end. In *The Recess* the only attempt at it is where Elinor banters Matilda in an elephantine fashion on her preference for Leicester. As for Godwin, the very idea of a joke in connection with him seems sacrilege. But with Maturin this all-important element makes its appearance. Sir Aymer has a very nice sense of humor. In fact he succeeds very well as a conventional funny man, much better than the average specimen of that genus in real life. The coxcomb dè Semonville is at times delightful; and for one instance of the brutal humor exhibited in the ugly scene where the outlaws amuse themselves with the vanity of Dame Marguerite, there are a dozen as delightful and harmless as that in which the roistering monk of St. Bernard's detains his superior at the door of the convent till his comrades can remove the remains of their revels. In all these points,—the general forward movement of the story,

the selection of incidents, the vividness of character-drawing, and the introduction of humor,—Maturin shows a striking advance over all previous workers in the Terror School. It is greater honor to Maturin to have chastened his mad brain, in this one last book of his life with its promise of vastly better things had he lived to fulfil it, into something like resemblance to his great contemporary, than it is to have produced all the half insanely brilliant extravagances of his previous work; for this reason I have chosen to deal with his genius particularly from the point of view of Historical Fiction.

We have left to the end, for our culminating name, the man who shares with Hawthorne the title of "the Last of the old Romanticists," particularly because his spirit seems an essence curiously independent of any Cult, and partly because we wish to set his iridescent genius as the prism which, though drawing its light from a unique source, yet concentrates within itself the various colors glancing across the pages of our School. The theory that Edgar Allan Poe drew his inspiration from opium-dreams is long exploded. From source beyond mortal ken, doubtless, was his genius illuminated. But it was an angel, not a devil, who whispered to him, however much the weird glow of his genius may have confused the meaning of the message to mortal eyes.

While unique in essence, Poe's spirit is colored far more by the contemporary German Romance School than by the English. At times the very tint of Tieck seems thrown across his work, while his idiosyncrasy and Hoffman's seem almost identical. Yet, as has been said, Poe, as universal master of the terrific, brings to focus, as in a crystal, every element found among our Terrorists. The ghost-ridden castles of Walpole find a cleverer architect in the haunted *House of Usher*. *The Pit and the Pendulum* revivifies the hackneyed horrors of the Inquisition. The vast realm of Subjective Fear, just entered by Mrs. Radcliffe, owns him master in his Tales of Conscience. Psychological problems, handled so cleverly by Brown, find subtle expression in his Mesmeric Stories. The lurid magnificence of Beckford's Hall of Eblis in *Vathek* is matched by the ominous splendor

of the palace in *The Masque of the Red Death.* The phenomena of insanity, touched by Maturin with morbid power, thrill us in his pages to ineffable horror; while the light, exquisite eeriness of "Monk" Lewis's *Spirit of the Frozen Ocean* is perceptible throughout his Celestial Tales. In short, he runs the whole gamut of the soul's susceptibility of Fear. It is fitting, then, that we should close our discussion of that wonderful susceptibility with the mention of one who did not, like others we have dealt with, manage skilfully some few chords, but who struck the whole range of them with a master's hand.

And so, having followed this little bypath in English literature through the wilderness to the point where its obscure windings grow luminous with the glory reflected upon it from Hawthorne, Poe, and Walter Scott, we step over into the broad golden Highway to follow reverently these three, and all the rest of the illustrious throng who, leaving these humbler brethren on earth, sweep on into immortality. Possibly we may never again penetrate into its recesses, and yet we have found many beauties there of which we had not dreamed, and shall always look back lovingly to the little group of men and women who tried faithfully, and not always bunglingly, to bring the world back to love for the glorious, long-despised lore of Mediæval days, and who, in the later development of the Tales of Terror, struck out from the soul itself a harmony weird, powerful, and not unlovely. Peace be to their ashes, and to their spirits refuge from oblivion in the hearts of those who, looking underneath all external absurdity, can discern in their work some genuine throbbing of an immortal chord.

Bibliography

TALES

(In addition to what we consider the representative novels of this School we have mentioned Regina Maria Roche's works as samples of successful imitations; Leitch Ritchie's, as samples of average hackwork-imitations; and Francis Lathom's, as samples of the extravagant absurdities that made the School a laughing stock.)

Horace Walpole . . . . . *The Castle of Otranto.*

Anne Radcliffe . . . . . *A Sicilian Romance.*
A Romance of the Forest.
The Mysteries of Udolpho.
The Italian.
The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne.
Gaston de Blondeville.

Clara Reeve	*The Old English Baron.*
William Beckford	*Vathek.*
Matthew Gregory Lewis	*The Monk.* *The Bravo of Venice.*
Charles Brockden Brown	*Wieland.* *Edgar Huntly.* *Arthur Mervyn.* *Ormond.*
Mrs. Shelley	*Frankenstein.*
Charles Robert Maturin	*Melmoth.* *The Fatal Revenge.* *The Wild Irish Boy.* *The Milesian Chief.* *Women.* *The Albigenses.*
John Banim	*The Tales of the O'Hara Family.*
Thomas Leland	*Longsword.*
Sophia Lee	*The Recess.*
Regina Maria Roche	*The Children of the Abbey.* *The Chapel Castle.* *The Nocturnal Visit.* *The Nun's Picture.* *The Maid of the Hamlet.* *Clermont.* *The Bridal of Dunamore.* *The Vicar of Lansdowne.* *The Tradition of the Castle.* *The Munster Cottage Boy.* *The Discarded Son.*
Leitch Ritchie	*The London Night's Entertainment* *Schinderhannes, The Robber of the Rhine.* *The Game of Life.*
Francis Lathom	*Mystery.* *The Midnight Bell.* *The Mysterious Freebooter.* *The Impenetrable Secret.* *The Fatal Vow, or St. Michael's Monastery.* *The Unknown, or the Northern Gallery.* *Very Strange but Very True.* *Astonishment!!!!!*

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

I shall criticize all four authors.

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED

LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

2MAY'64RH

IN STACKS

APR 18 1964

RECD LD

MAY 16'64-5 PM

NOV 10 '90

AUTO DISC NOV 09 1990

LD 21A–40*m*-4,'63
(D6471s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

YC103926

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES

C032004855